

**Lower Snake River District (LSRD)
Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting
Wednesday, May 21, 2003
Marsing Community Center, Marsing, Idaho
Minutes**

Council Members Present: Bob Amidon, Bob Baker, Gil Green, Donna Griffin, Russ Heughins, Ted Howard, Sandra Mitchell, Ric Raymondi, Kenneth Reid, Brenda Richards, John Robison, Chris Salove, Brian Schrage, and Don Weilmunster

Council Members Absent: Bill Platts

BLM Advisory Present: K Lynn Bennett, State Director; Glen Secrist, District Manager - Designated Federal Official; MJ Byrne, RAC Coordinator; and Mary Jones, Recorder.

Other BLM Present: Jack Sept, Idaho State Office (ISO) Liaison Specialist; Erv Cowley, ISO Rangeland Management Specialist; Fritz Rennebaum, Upper Columbia Salmon Clearwater District Manager, John Hatch, LSRD Resource Advisor; Daryl Albiston, Four Rivers Field Office Manager; Eddie Guerrero, Jarbidge Field Office Manager; and Jenna Whitlock, Owyhee Field Office Manager.

Statements attributed to individual Council members are not direct quotes unless so indicated.

Council Business, General Information and Opening Remarks:

Chairman Weilmunster called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Council members were thanked for coming. K Lynn Bennett, State Director for Idaho and Glen Secrist, new LSRD District Manager were introduced.

Motion was made by Russ Heughins and Seconded by Brenda Richards that the Chairman Certify the minutes of the February 18, 2003 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Secrist provided information on his background and to express his appreciation for the level of commitment demonstrated by the RAC and the work completed on the various issues.

Mr. Bennett also thanked everyone for coming and expressed his appreciation for the work and efforts of the Council. Mr. Bennett shared information on:

- \$ Director Clark's appreciation for the service the RACs provide to BLM.
- \$ Secretary Norton's Four C's philosophy of consultation, cooperation and communication, all in the service of conservation. Mr. Bennett added that she has added community to this list.
- \$ How pooling resources can benefit the organizations and communities.
- \$ Exploring opportunities to identify efficiencies for BLM Idaho and the work Fritz

Rennebaum is doing to refine/define how Idaho BLM can best organize to serve the public in the communities we serve.

- \$ Proposed changes to the grazing regulations and policy, and the workshops to be held next week.
- \$ Identification of some of the priority issues (drought, weeds, healthy forest initiative, lepidium, sage-grouse habitat conservation, recreation, etc.) and finding a balance between the issues and diverse interests of the people who use the land.
- \$ Using the three RAC Chairs for assistance on statewide issues.
- \$ Tasking District Managers to ensure work done by the RACs is meaningful, dedicated, administrative support provided for RAC's, and that the RACs know the disposition of recommendations they send to either the District Manager, State Director, or Director Clarke.

Idaho BLM Organization Refinement - Fritz Rennebaum, UCSC District Manager

Background: State Director Bennett requested that Fritz look at ways to refine the Idaho organization. The intent of this charge isn't to do a wholesale reorganization but to see how BLM Idaho can be more service oriented, serve the users more efficiently, see where boundaries can be adjusted, and to look at staffing to see if administration and resources are appropriately aligned. While looking at this, issues such as budget implications/limitations, facilities, employee morale and political sensitivities and considerations will be addressed. Fritz has interviewed several individuals and while he has received valuable feedback thus far, he requested the Council also provide their thoughts on organization refinement. Chairman Weilmunster opened the floor to questions and comments.

Discussion: Ted Howard requested that Fritz brief the Native American Tribes during the Wings and Roots forum as part of the consultation process the tribes have as a sovereign nation. Russ mentioned that realignment might also create problems because people using the lands in an area aren't necessarily from that area (i.e., recreation use originating in Boise but happening elsewhere). Russ also commented that BLM needs to be more proactive in getting information to the public. K Lynn introduced John Hatch of the LSRD who is Glen's assistant working on outreach with the different groups. Brenda Richards commented on the value of locating managers and staff closer to those they work with would be an improvement. She asked BLM to consider the possibility of locating a field office in Marsing, Idaho, even if it is just for part of the year. Fritz said that one of the things he heard is to keep the people off the road so they don't spend so much time driving and that the people should be closer to where the important action is. Bob Baker commented on the "can do" attitude he is hearing from management. John Robison supports the idea of having more people on the ground and not hearing the excuse of not having staff to complete monitoring and enforcement. He stated that correcting problems before they occur or get out of hand is important and that enforcement and education go hand in hand. The RAC Members agreed it was important to locate BLM staff out in the communities. Fritz mentioned the problems with identifying whether techs were needed or the professional Rangeland Management Specialist and getting the right balance so the right people are doing the right thing. Fritz thanked the RAC for their comments.

Recommendation/Action Item: No action or formal recommendation made. Fritz was asked to consult with the Native American Tribes through the Wings and Roots Forum.

Idaho RAC Chair's Meeting in Washington DC - Don Weilmunster

Background: Chairman Weilmunster along with Fritz Rennebaum, Jack Sept and RAC Coordinator, MJ Byrne attended a RAC Chair's meeting in Washington DC in April. Idaho's other two RAC Chairs also attended the meeting. Chairman Weilmunster reported that the meetings were valuable and were a lot of work. The Chairs asked that BLM provide them with meaningful work. Several briefings/presentations were made at the meeting and this information will be provided to Council members as soon as it is available.

Discussion: Brenda Richards expressed the importance of the three Councils communicating with one another noting that there should be some assurance that expectations aren't beyond what can realistically be achieved. MJ Byrne shared some of her notes from the meeting which included: (1) the administration wants to share a new level of decision making and ways the RAC can be involved (2) collaborative ways of working together, (3) economic impacts of decisions, (4) discussion on weeds and their impacts, (5) healthy forest initiative, (6) wildfires and what happens afterwards, (7) RS 2477, (8) national RAC website, (8) speakers talking to the Councils about national issues, (9) Decrease the time it takes for RAC appointments, (10) funding for the Councils, (10) A national RAC web site is being developed, (11) appointment of a full-time national RAC Coordinator, (12) need to get RAC Members out to the field more often, (13) success of RAC's will become a performance element in managers EPRs. Jack Sept, who has been appointed to the RAC National Rejuvenation Team, commented on the issue of filling Council appointments. He said the Bureau is going to look at ways to speed the process up. There was some assurance that approval of both the RAC Charter and appointments would move a little faster.

Recommendation/Action Item: No formal recommendation or motion. MJ will assemble and distribute the information provided at the RAC Chair meeting to all Council members.

BLM's Standards and Guidelines Regulatory Review - Status Report - Erv Cowley

Background: Erv spoke to the Council at the February 18, 2003 meeting regarding the way BLM Idaho implements Standards & Guides (S&G) procedures which are a way of implementing the Grazing Regulations. Two major questions were raised (1) are the procedures for conducting S&G assessments in conformance with the regulations and (2) if they are meeting the regulations, how well are the decisions and results of the process being implemented on the ground. Erv provided an update of what has happened since that briefing and shared the findings of the Core Team working on this issue. A copy of the Internal Working Draft dated April 14, 2003 was distributed.

Discussion: Brenda Richards thanked Erv for his time and interest. K Lynn reported that when Erv finalizes the report there will be new or additional instructions to the Field Offices on how they should conduct S&G assessments. Ted Howard asked about the consistency review that the report mentioned and he said he didn't feel that the Native American Tribes had received the consultation and coordination required and requested this be done. Council members pointed out the importance of having sufficient review time. The Council is also looking at the possibility of holding a series of listening meetings.

Recommendation/Action Item: No formal recommendation or motion was made. Formal consultation with the tribes was requested. Council member comments on Erv's report should be

submitted to MJ who will share the information with the entire Council. Comments and recommendations on the report are needed by mid-June. Brenda Richards will notify the Council of the next subgroup meeting.

RS 2477 Overview and Update - Daryl Albiston

Background: Daryl provided handouts on RS-2477 (1) Final Draft of Idaho BLM Road Management & Maintenance Guidelines for Idaho's Public Lands dated 10/9/2002, (2) District Court order from the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and the Sierra Club. Daryl pointed out that the District Court Order document is a good one for learning about RS-2477. Daryl also explained some of the background relating to RS-2477 roads and why there is confusion.

Discussion: Bob Baker pointed out that RS-2477 does have serious ramifications in regard to private property rights and that it is likely this will be brought forward again in the next legislature. John Robison expressed his concern that BLM doesn't have any real guidelines on this and roads are a very important issue in addressing habitat concerns. Brenda Richards commented about the differing opinions relative to the issue and asked about the MOUs BLM has with the counties for maintaining these roads. Daryl explained that the LSRD works closely with the counties on road maintenance issues. At this time there is a Secretarial Order to not process any RS-2477 applications. If Council members have questions relative to RS-2477 issues they should contact Daryl.

Recommendations/Action Item: No recommendations, formal motions or action items.

Plants out of Place II and Silent Invaders - video

Discussion: Glen suggested there could be an opportunity to create a RAC subgroup to help deal with the noxious weed problem in Idaho. The work group could help heighten awareness by getting key groups to assist with mapping and identifying new infestations. Bob Baker suggested that some specimens could be provided showing what the weeds actually look like and having specialists identify the various weeds as they are working with permittees and others. Jenna Whitlock reported that the Owyhee Field Office is trying to pair the student conservation groups with high school students to do GPS work and a systematic inventory of the weeds in the Owyhee Field Office. Jenna is waiting to hear if this project will be funded. There is no Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA) in the Owyhee Field Office at this time but Jenna is hoping to hire a full time person to address this situation. The Four Rivers Field office currently has 9 CWMAs, mostly in the northern part of the field office. Daryl offered to have someone in the weed program provide training to anyone who might be interested. Donna Griffin asked about funding for the weed program and expressed the importance of using the information once it is gathered. Bob Baker expressed his frustration of treating weeds on private land when the surrounding federal lands aren't treated. One of the keys to this issue is the use of volunteers and organizations and then maintaining and using the data they provide.

Recommendations/Action Item: No recommendations, formal motions or action items identified.

MJ Byrne introduced Jake Ball, Regional Director for Natural Resources and the Environment from U.S. Senator Crapo's office.

Chairman Weilmunster made a call for public comments. There were none.

Subcommittee Reports:

Resource Management Plans (RMPs) - Gil Green

Background: Gil provided a handout outlining the two RMP's schedule/update, along with a copy of the collaborative process that is being used to build support for implementation of the decisions resulting from the development of the RMP's and the accompanying Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). Gil reported that the next step for RAC involvement will be two Data Fairs. The first will be on June 9 at the Marsing Community Center and the second on June 10 at the Boise Centre on the Grove. The intent of the Data Fair is to show those who attend the information BLM has and how it will be used as alternatives for the EIS's are developed and the analysis of them is completed. The public will have an opportunity to review the data and hopefully share any data they may have for BLM use. The Data Fairs will be an open house format and will be held from 4:00 to 8:00 both days. The Council is encouraged to participate in both events.

The next step in the planning process will be alternative development. At this time, the BLM-LSRD staff is working on the no action alternative (or current management). In late summer and early fall, small groups will be formed to develop other alternatives. RAC Members participation is important in the small groups. When the alternative development is completed, the public will be asked to assist with refining the alternatives through a process similar to what was done in September 2002, with Desired Future Conditions for both the two resource planning areas. If activities continue according to schedule, the alternatives will be complete and ready for public review in December. In addition, Mike O'Donnell, RMP Team Leader for both plans is hoping to have a peer review of the alternatives.

Discussion: Discussion centered on clarification of dates and process which are outlined in the handout.

Recommendations/Action Items: No recommendations or formal motions were made. The RAC Members are encouraged to continue their active involvement in the public process, to attend the Data Fairs, and to participate in the development of the alternatives.

Off Highway Vehicle and Transportation Management - Donna Griffin

Background: Donna reported that the Council hosted a series of listening meetings regarding the National OHV strategy at the beginning of this process. Now that the National strategy is complete, work is being done on a statewide strategy. Donna reviewed a handout that detailed the Idaho BLM OHV Travel and Access Management Strategy which includes: (1) history, (2) OHV strategy, (3) policy, (4) action plan categories, (5) comprehensive Travel Management Plans, (6) Implementation Plan, (7) schedule to complete the strategy, (8) How can the Idaho RACs help, and (8) next steps. BLM State Director Bennett has formed some working groups made up of RAC Members from each of the three RAC's in Idaho. One of them is assisting with development, review and plans for implementation of Idaho's OHV Transportation Strategy. They are being asked to review comments received during the comment period on the State's Draft Strategy, assist with development of an Action Plan and to help set priorities on a "to do" list for implementation plan. The implementation plan will outline how to complete the actions identified within 3 years. Comments on the State Draft Strategy are due by June 30.

Discussion: Discussion included: (1) possibility of dovetailing the noxious weed program into

the OHV program, (2) importance of enforcement, (3) education is as important as enforcement, (4) possibility of putting together an Idaho team of the different user groups to help with education, (5) finding grant money to develop maps, help with education, advertising, etc. (6) look to other states for a model program, (7) using the Land Use Plans for route designations, (8) increasing burden on Emergency Medical Services personnel resulting from significant increase in numbers of OHV traffic in rural parts of southwestern Idaho.

Recommendations/Action Items: No recommendations or formal motions were made.

Comments on the State OHV and Transportation Management Strategy need to be submitted to Donna by June 30.

Sage Grouse Habitat Management - Richard Raymondi

Background: The subgroup met in March to discuss the EA for the wind energy application in the Jarbidge Field Office. Ric referred Council members to the subgroup report which made the following five recommendations to the LSRD:

1. There should be reviews of the proposed action by the BLM State Office and LSRD in addition to the review previously performed by the Jarbidge Field Office.
2. There should be an increase in the amount of study of sage-grouse activities, populations, and lek (nesting) locations, etc. in the area of the proposed action.
3. There needs to be more extensive evaluation and description of the impacts of the proposed meteorological testing since the Draft 2002 Sage-Grouse Habitat Planning Map (4-26-02) shows the Browns Bench area to be a lek stronghold area.
4. Information regarding sage grouse use, populations, etc. needs to be collected and impacts evaluated before Environmental Assessments are written.
5. Information regarding proposed actions within the LSRD should be presented to the RAC prior to EAs being written and Findings of No Significant Impact being made.

Council members were provided a copy of a proposed letter to Eddie Guerrero with the above recommendations.

As Council member Dr. Bill Platts was absent from the meeting, subgroup member Steve Goddard provided the following: Dr. Platts and Mr. Goddard are appointed members of the Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee established by the Fish and Game in early 2003. The local working group discussed where each group is for their areas and the advisory committee is trying to coordinate activities so there will be one goal of developing a conservation plan that is effective and will keep sage-grouse from being listed. This group will meet again on June 3 at 9:00 in the Fish and Game Office. Questions regarding this meeting should be referred to Tom Hemker at 334-2920.

Discussion: \$400,000 was made available to the state of Idaho, through a Congressional appropriation, for the State Advisory Committee to divvy out to the different work groups after approval of on-the-ground rehabilitation activities by the local sage-grouse working groups. Activities already approved include mapping, and population and nesting activities monitoring with helicopters. On May 29 there will be a meeting at Fish and Game to discuss what BM and Fish and Game are doing.

Recommendations/Action Items: Motion was made by Ric Raymondi and seconded by Russ Heughins that the Council send the proposed letter to Mr. Eddie Guerrero, with cc's to LSRD's District Manager, State Director, and BLM's National Director. The motion carried

unanimously. Motion made by Ric Raymondi and seconded by Brenda Richards that BLM continue with evaluation of sag- grouse habitat. The motion carried unanimously.

Rangeland Standards and Guidelines - Brenda Richards

Background: Brenda reported that the subgroup would like to prepare a letter to BLM requesting that the subgroup be provided a copy of the draft regulations in a timely manner so comments can be prepared. In addition, the subgroup suggested that public meetings be held in each State before the regulations become final.

Discussion: Erv did a good job in covering what has been going on with S&Gs. The Council was invited and encouraged to participate in field training and field work. A tentative date of June 30 was arranged for the next subgroup meeting.

Recommendations/Action Items: No formal motions were made. All Council members were in favor of the recommendation to prepare a letter to BLM. MJ will work with Brenda in preparing this letter. Council members need to send comments on Erv's report to MJ.

River Recreation Management - Donna Griffin

Background: The boater safety program has begun and a brochure about this program will be distributed to the outfitter this Friday. In addition, the Idaho Statesman and the Idaho Press Tribune will run articles about the program during the summer. This will be a three phase program that will include prizes for those who participate. The idea is to keep the message about safety while floating the Payette and other rivers in the forefront of the public's mind this summer. There was approval for lowering the cost of the VIP passes for this year. The fee demo program is currently under review and a letter was sent to Senator Craig's office. The RAC has not received a response to the letter yet.

Discussion: None

Recommendations/Action Items: No recommendations or formal motions were made.

Fire and Fuels Management - Donna Griffin

Background: No subgroup report. MJ Byrne told the RAC Members that Jamie Anderson of Garden Valley has an update to the information she provided to them at their Council meeting in February. She submitted a second request to the Council for a letter of support for her efforts to obtain funding for a community park in Garden Valley, Idaho.

Discussion: The Members agreed that this was a worthwhile project, and asked Chairman Weilmunster whether he knew of any conflicts or issues with this proposal. He said he saw none and encouraged the Council to move forward with a letter of support. Daryl Albiston, BLM-LSRD's Four Rivers Field Office Manager did not see any issues with Ms. Anderson's proposal.

Recommendations/Action Items: The RAC directed Donna Griffin and MJ to draft a letter of endorsement and send it the appropriate decision makers.

Field Office Highlights

Jarbidge Field Office - Eddie Guerrero

\$ Eddie is setting up a field trip of the Brown Fence Area for June 2. Eddie and MJ will work jointly on the logistics. He welcomed the RAC's advice regarding the wind energy proposal.

- \$ Received a proposal for a motorcycle race in the wild horse herd management area this spring. Comments were received, including concerns about sage-grouse habitat and potential negative impacts to wild horse foals in the spring. The sponsor is now suggesting the race be held in October/November. The Council and interested publics will receive a letter on this and the EA will be updated.
- \$ A lawsuit was filed relating to Temporary Non-Renewable (TNR) forage. A temporary restraining order was filed and the Judge ordered a NEPA document be completed on the allotments. The EA went out and protests are now being received from both sides.
- \$ Jarbidge road grading and improving bull trout habitat - as a result of settlement with Elko County, the Forest Service is now preparing an EIS. A number of alternatives have been identified regarding road placement. BLM is a cooperating agency with the preparation of the EIS. Public meetings will take place this summer, with the Forest Service as the sponsor and host.
- \$ Unauthorized road grading. The decision to rehab the area will be implemented sometime this fall.

Daryl Albiston - Four Rivers Field Office

- \$ Work on the Goodrich S&G watershed (NE of Cambridge) will be delayed by 6-7 months due to shifts in personnel to assist with the Owyhee assessments. Should still be okay in meeting the schedule.
- \$ Work on lepidium continues in both the Four Rivers and Jarbidge Field Offices.
- \$ The Cascade land exchange closed 2 weeks ago. This was a good exchange and some key habitats and critical resources were secured. The exchange involved 66 parties with Jerry Thiesen facilitating the exchange for those individuals.
- \$ Recreation programs are moving into on-site activities. Cove Recreation site is going to be closed over Memorial Day due to some heavy construction work and resulting in public safety issues. The first phase of the rebuild is expected to be complete in late July. The next phase will begin in August and progress through the fall, weather permitting.
- \$ Working with Animal Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) on the cricket issue. The U. S. Department of Agriculture is completing an EIS to address alternatives for controlling the impact of the insects to agricultural and rangeland in southern Idaho.
- \$ Daryl is working on a raft trip down the Payette River for Council members to show them improvements to recreation and boating facilities on the river resulting from monies collected from the Payette River Fee Demo Program. Daryl, Bill Hagdorn and MJ will work with Members on date and logistics.

Owyhee Field Office - Jenna Whitlock

- \$ The field office has two primary areas of focus (1) the RMP and (2) Rangeland S&G assessments to allotments.
- \$ Two of the eleven core areas are complete with final decisions (W Antelope and Indian Meadows). Appeals have been filed by Western Watershed and the Committee for Idaho's High Desert on Western Antelope.
- \$ Final assessments and determinations on Jump Creek and Flint Creek are complete.

- \$ The next assessments and determinations to be completed include Louse Creek, Castle Hills Lambert, South Mountain, Silver City Nickel Creek and Boone Creek. The draft assessment and determination on the Corta allotment will be done in June.
- \$ Council members who want to be involved in these assessments should contact Jenna. Field trips and meetings can be arranged.
- \$ Working on Environmental Assessments for: (1) proposed sale at Flint Creek; (2) proposed sale to Owyhee County for land for a proposed regional landfill; (3) Special Recreation Permit to Catherine Freer for wilderness therapy; and (4) Silver City clean-up days and treatments to address diseased tree, to reduce fire hazard from dead and dying trees on the hills surrounding Silver City.
- \$ Field season in full swing - collecting data for next year's schedule (lek survey, trend, upland health assessments, etc.) and completing road inventory.
- \$ If opportunities arise for floating the Owyhee River next spring Jenna will contact Council Members. Many of the Members expressed a lot of interest in this trip.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 26. Ted Howard told the Members that his invitation for the RAC's meeting to be held at the Shoshone-Paiute Reservation had to be withdrawn. MJ will work with Chairman Weilmunster and Vice Chair Griffin to identify a location. An announcement of the location will be sent to the Council Members.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Minutes prepared by: Mary Jones, and reviewed by MJ Byrne and Donna Griffin.

Certified by:

_____date_____
 Don Weilmunster
 Resource Advisory Council Chairman

_____date_____
 Glen Secrist
 Lower Snake River District Manager